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# SKETCHES FROM LIFE IN MELANESIA

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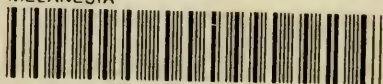
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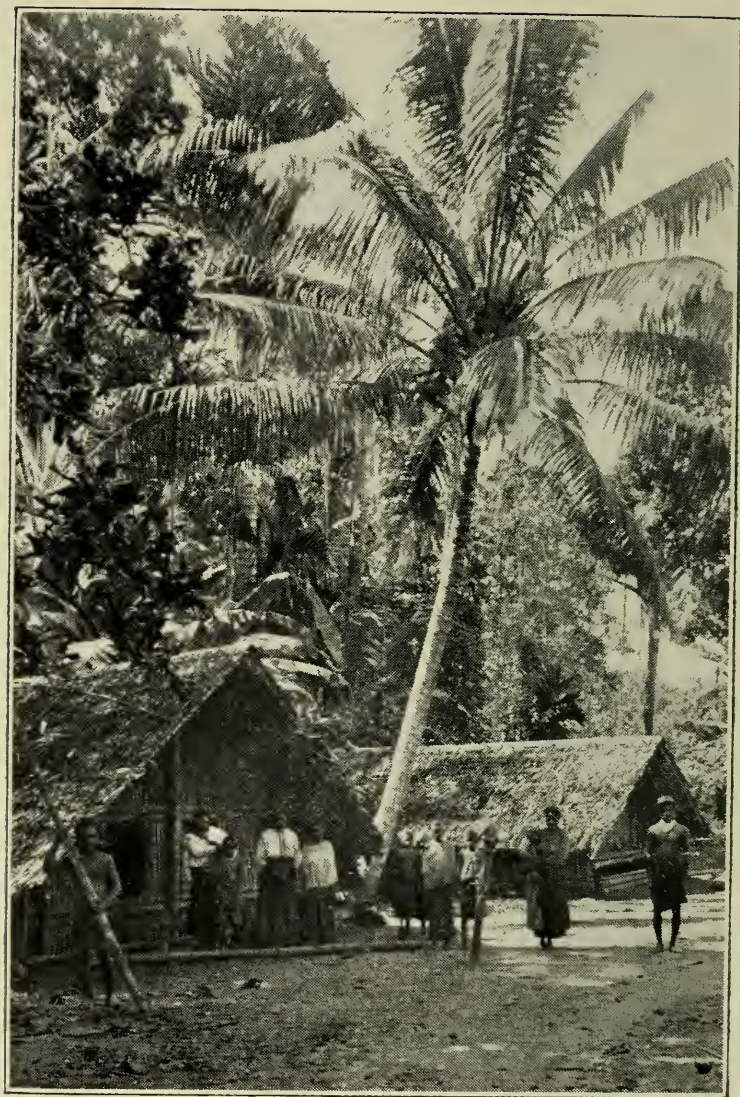
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SKETCHES FROM LIFE IN  
MELANESIA



VILLAGE OF SAA, MALA, SOLOMON ISLANDS.

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# SKETCHES FROM LIFE IN MELANESIA

BY

ELLEN WILSON

LONDON

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# SKETCHES FROM LIFE IN MELANESIA

## A TOUR IN THE BUSH

IT was on a still afternoon in Christmas week that we found ourselves peacefully gliding down the coast, first to join in a belated Christmas feast, and then to visit some bush villages we had not yet seen. After the rush and fatigue of all that is involved by Christmas in the islands of Melanesia, it was a blissful rest to sit still, with nothing to do but watch the coast as each new point came in sight, and to note the principal hiding-places of the spirits, especially of the *Mae*—those very unpleasant beings who can take the form of either sex, and, meeting a solitary wayfarer on the path, can cast a charm so that the victim, on going home, either dies or goes mad.

We paused once to take up Ernest Tarimalenga with his wife and baby son, who were also bound for the feast. Ernest, now a priest, was one of the best of the teachers, and his wife

and baby might, I always thought, have served as models for a Melanesian Madonna and Child.

We were to sleep for two nights at a village on the coast, and then proceed to Lesasa, where the great gathering was to take place. Accordingly we sent for the teacher and, giving him a supply of tobacco, asked him to arrange for the carrying up of our baggage, which included bedding, and provision for four weeks.

A contingent of men and boys in due course appeared, each selecting carefully the smallest article he could find ! However, in the end they collected all, and went on before us. We followed later with an escort of six little boys and girls, feeling scarcely equal to walking anywhere, but hopeful of reaching somewhere !

At last, after three hours' hard going, we reached Lesasa, to find the priest-in-charge in much the same state of mind and grime as ourselves, since he had been acting as superintendent of the works all day amid much rain.

But the house was a very comfortable one, with two large bed-places and a bench. Neither of us being tall, the ends of our bed-places made excellent tables, and one charm of a native house consists of the numerous projections from which bags may be hung. The mat which served as portière was of insufficient length, but a mackin-

tosh at night filled up the gap, and with lowered lantern we made our toilet, ignoring the number of eyes that we knew were peering in curiously through the walls of thatch.

Such a crowd had already assembled that it was found necessary to hold two evensongs, as the church was not nearly large enough to contain everyone. On coming out we vaguely shook a multitude of hands stretched out in most kindly welcome, and then thankfully stretched ourselves on our cane bedsteads. And ever, as we woke at intervals during the night, we heard the fall of steady torrents of rain, and wondered sleepily how the next day's festival would go off with slush below and rain above. However, it lessened towards morning and was fair for the Celebration at 6.30 a.m. Not more than forty were present, the large majority of the people being still under instruction.

While I cleared up after breakfast, Miss X went out to reconnoitre, soon to return with the news that the path looked like a bog: so we decided to put on our skirts of yesterday and our fearful boots. Down to the waist we looked festal, onward to our boots like two tramps, and in this guise we descended as best we could to the *sara*—a central space found in every village—where the dancing had already begun. Here

we shook hands with countless women, one of whom fled from the two white creatures in terror, but plucked up courage shortly and returned.

By this time a large number had arrived from our own village in the second boat (no fewer than forty having squeezed in somehow) to swell the crowd of onlookers. Soon, however, there were very few onlookers, such was the infection of the dance, and hand in hand with our new friends we footed it too with great enjoyment. As a rule the men and women dance separately, but in the *sawagoro*, usually danced by moonlight, the women dancers form an outer circle round the men.

In Melanesia prayer and dancing are divided by no severe line, and at eleven o'clock the dancers were all assembled for service in the large temporary booth erected for the occasion. I have experienced nothing more wonderful than these gatherings where over a thousand voices join in prayer and praise. And the Christmas hymns, and the story of the shepherds, seem to come with a special sweetness when heard in a far-off land, and surrounded by a coloured race.

Every variety of dress was there: the teachers in clean white shirts and trousers, others in a



shirt or singlet, others with a loin-cloth only, down to the little children, beautifully naked as nature made them. One lady, lately returned from Queensland, was resplendent in a magenta dress, fur cap, and tippet trimmed with fur. Her sufferings must have been great, but she was upheld by the proud knowledge that she was the most fully and expensively dressed member of the congregation.

The sermon was on the Angelic Salutation, and the preacher pointed out how impossible such a gathering as ours would have been in the old heathen days—days not so far distant either. It was nearly one o'clock when we came out, and we snatched a brief rest, as we had been on our feet or our knees more or less since dawn. Thanks to the rain, we had been able to catch a bucketful of water, but, though cleaner than the local supply, it had gained rather a nasty taste by passing over the leaf-thatched roof.

On going down again we found football in full swing, and stood protected from a shower under a mango-tree—very beautiful with its young shoots of a pale terra-cotta shade. Presently a message came that the feast was ready, and we all adjourned to the booth, where a bountiful supply of food was portioned out,

pig, fowl, yams, etc., cooked to perfection in the native ground-ovens. No one sat down, but each took away his or her portion wrapped up in leaves and ate it standing. A kindly neighbour, seeing my clumsy efforts to fold up my piece of fowl and yam, came to the rescue, and made it up into a neat parcel with the deftness and skill of long habit.

Now the people are gradually realizing the spirit of fellowship that lies in the sharing of a meal. At Lesasa we had not reached this height of understanding, and soon the booth was empty and the large gathering had broken up, leaving the village to its normal state of quiet. Before our own people left, one or two of the men warned us to keep an eye on our goods (the customs here are very different from ours)—a kindly warning, but quite unnecessary. We kept no eye on anything and missed nothing.

Lesasa seemed a more desirable place than ever when I went out in the very early morning next day to take a view of the land. I knew from aching limbs that the village lay high up, but I was not prepared for the wonderful view that stretched before me. It looked exquisite that morning with everything washed clean by the rain and the early sunlight touching the

distant hills, whilst, owing to the late storm, one could hear faintly the roar of the surf on the weather side some few miles away.

After this we settled down to business. There is never any difficulty in arranging classes. A curious affinity shows itself at once between the teachers and the taught, some being attracted to one, and some to the other. We each formed our own class in this way, and the numbers were extraordinarily even. As to knowledge, they were all much on a level—that is, on the ground beneath the lowest rung of the ladder of learning!

The difficulty was to get their names. No one will give her own name, nor will the men give the names of their wives. This had been told me already by a man who had finally whispered his wife's name into my ear. But when all are seated in school the names can be got quite easily by asking each one the name of her neighbour. Nobody minds giving away the personality of another, though she will not part with her own.

The schooling was very simple—a Bible lesson with the help of a picture, followed by a sewing-class. Those who aspired to reading or writing received private tuition in our house, and one little boy, Peter, was very keen to learn

all he could, and would have gladly spent his whole time with us. It is not so much in school, however, that the work is done, though school does bring one into touch with the women, and so makes the little talks afterwards much easier. It is the living among them, even for a short time, that tells, and these women, apart from their curiosity in seeing and watching the ways of white women, did, I know, appreciate having women workers of their own. And there was the crowning joy of learning to sew! Now that they all aspire to skirts, and buy the material from the trading boats that come along, it is well they should know how to make them up neatly, and each began by making a bag, which in itself was a priceless possession. In the Solomons we are now so far advanced that ornamental stitching in coloured thread is added, or bands of contrasting colour laid on, but at Lesasa we were content with plain utility.

Meanwhile we were comfortably settled in our house, its only drawback in that rainy weather being a little stream that made its way through the middle of our earthen floor as the trench outside filled up. On the other hand, the rain washed our clothes and filled our bucket and kettle. Our boots were rather a trouble to

us, as they shrank in the process of drying, and had to be slit before we could get our feet in.

Sunday is always full of interest, though somewhat trying to patience. Matins is at no fixed hour, as the congregation on that day includes folk from a number of neighbouring villages to whom indulgence must be extended. But when at last it began, the service was most reverent and hearty. The singing was peculiar, for they appeared to use the original tune merely as a theme on which to build a native melody; but we liked it, and it seemed to suit the surroundings better than the usual Anglican chants and tunes. The sermons were those of a very good man, simple and earnest.

Our house was seldom empty. There was always a small fire in the middle of the room for drying as well as cooking purposes, and the women would drop in and squat round it, looking curiously at our boots and chattels.

One day we were sitting like this, all very comfortable, when a man came in and said something, at which every woman hurriedly rose and went out, whereupon he reappeared with a companion, whom he introduced by name, adding in an aside that he was the big chief of all that part, and intimating that it



would be well to give him a present. His Highness did not stay long, having merely come out of curiosity, and to satisfy himself that we were inoffensive. We gave him a tin of meat, at which he beamed all over and departed, and on his exit the feminine element returned.

There is nearly always someone who acts as master of the ceremonies, and tells us what is etiquette and what is not. Here the post was filled by a man named Doli, whose young wife, Litala, was one of our keenest scholars. Hardly any of the women were baptized; the teacher assured us that they were anxious to be prepared, but the men stood in the way and forbade it. Some of my pleasantest walks were taken with this Litala. On one occasion we started to visit some sick folk when the sun was getting low—Litala, Lizzie, Peter, and I. Our walk led us through the *sara*, where were two men sitting on a drum. At sight of them Lizzie hastily pulled her *qana* over her head and drew to one side, telling Peter to speak to them. Immediately the men got up, went into a side path, and stood there with their backs turned till we had passed. Lizzie would vouchsafe no explanation, but when I told the teacher he looked amused, and said that Lizzie was

following the old custom, her husband being brother to one of the men, and that in old days no woman would have met or spoken to her brother-in-law. Lizzie's husband was still a heathen, so I presume she was forbidden to take up any modern ideas.

After this Litala asked if I would go and see her father, who had not left the house for years and had a very bad leg. I found an old man with a tonsure, surrounded by grey, matted curls. A veritable old heathen, and none too clean, unable to move, yet with a fine head. He looked like a mangy old lion, condemned to end his days in a cage. He had never even seen a white man, and a white woman was an object of deep interest. After an attentive survey he asked for medicine to cure his leg, but I had to tell him that I was afraid nothing would cure it now. Then he turned to his daughter and said something that I could not catch.

"What did he say?" I asked.

"He wants you to give him eternal life," was her reply.

I cannot describe the thrill those words gave me as I stood there in the dim light: the old man, crippled, ignorant, sitting so literally in darkness and the shadow of death, with that

one desire springing up in his heart, his eyes fixed eagerly on mine. What he visualized by life eternal who shall say? Hardly a continuance of his present miserable existence. There must surely have been some groping towards the light in his poor old heart. I could only answer that I had no power to give it, but that God would give it if we asked Him—and I am sure he has it now.

In spite of the torrential rains, we had a very happy time at Lesasa, and were sincerely sorry to say goodbye to all those nice friendly women.

When we finally started and looked back for a last glimpse of our house, the scene might have suggested the departure of the Israelites (on a miniature scale). Our packages, all of a small size, amounted to thirty, of which each person carried one.

At Nagon Karo, our next village, we found a large, airy schoolhouse prepared for us, and so sat down thankfully in the lap of luxury.

Charles Garu, the teacher in charge of the district round Nagon Karo, was a very good preacher and also a good conversationalist; he enjoyed telling us of his tour in New Zealand with Bishop Wilson, and of the cricket matches that the Melanesians had played and won.



The women came to us every day for school, and we had plenty of visitors. It was here that I asked a group of them whether the husbands there beat their wives, and the conversation might be translated as follows:

*Teacher*: "In England husbands do not beat their wives."

*Women*: "Really? But you white people are different. All wives are beaten here."

*Teacher*: "What, does E's husband beat her?"

*Women*: "Why, yes, I should just think so!"

*Teacher*: "Does A's husband beat her?"

*Women*: "Yes, *rather*!"

*Teacher*: "But, C, your husband does not beat you, surely?"

*C (cheerfully)*: "Oh yes! He beats me with a stick every day."

*Teacher*: "And G (the native teacher's wife), does H beat her?"

*Chorus*: "Oh no, of course H does not beat her!"

It seemed to be a recognized fact that a teacher's wife ought not to require, nor he to use, the stick. Nor, as far as I could make out, did any wife get beaten if she worked well; it was on lazy backs only that the stick descended.

The time passed quickly, and again we had to say goodbye, and set off on our walk down to the coast. Our number of packages had greatly decreased, for we had eaten through a good many, and given away the contents of others, so that twelve bearers amply sufficed. It was an easy and delightful walk down through the bush, and Charles was a very pleasant guide. He talked about the old beliefs—the vague idea of a hereafter, that offered no guess at its character or its locality. Of the two spirits, Suqe and Tagaro—the former the origin of all that was bad, the latter of all that was good. Or how they lived in constant fear of two things, war and spirits. Whatever ill befell a man, it was the work of a spirit in revenge for something he had consciously or unconsciously done. He told of the number of medicinal leaves, known only to some; and showed us a tree the leaves of which, when baked and applied to the skin, acted in the same way as mustard. He picked the frond of a fern, very like our *Filix mas*, and said that in old days, if a person had fever, they would strip the frond, throwing away the leaves and with them the fever. One wished the same easy remedy were efficacious now. They used the juice of certain leaves to whiten the hair, and by way of illustration he touched a white

front lock, which we had already noticed, and which he had bleached in the days when he was a young "knot."

On we went, descending gradually in the pleasant shade of the trees, amidst the call of birds and the hum of insect life, till we came out suddenly on the cliff. There below us lay the sea, calm and clear, and of a sapphire blue. We exclaimed in wonder at its beauty. "Yes," said Charles quite simply, "when I see it like this I think of what John wrote in the Book of the Revelations of 'the sea of glass.'"

It was not far from there to the village, where we said goodbye with much regret to our late hosts, and subsided rather gladly into the comfort of a wooden house with a dry floor.

The time spent in this village on the coast made a very pleasant finish to our little tour. There was an excellent teacher, who put up a line for our clothes, read the service in tones worthy of a minor canon, and whose sermons were of the best, both in style and matter. I remember a particularly good one on the feeding of the five thousand, and the comparison drawn between the journey to Jerusalem of those pilgrims, and of our own to the heavenly Jerusalem, both supplied with food for the journey by our Lord.

On one Sunday only did the preacher descend to a lower level, moved by hot indignation at seeing a very small congregation in church, the rest being engaged in some big cooking. He poured forth the vials of his wrath on us, the faithful remnant, giving us a good sound spiritual whipping, and impressing on us the fact that it was Satan's food that was being cooked!

As no one had any clock or watch, there was a doubt daily as to when the bell would ring for Matins. I asked the teacher one day how he guessed the time, and he said that he always rang the bell when the sunlight reached a certain point on the hill. What was his signal on cloudy days we failed to discover.

One morning I remember walking down to church with the lovely view before us framed by a triple rainbow—the most perfect I have ever seen. One was loth to go into church while anything so exquisite was presented to our view outside.

Our stay in this village brought our tour to its close. All too soon the boat came to take us back to our ordinary district work, but we returned much the better for the change, and cheered by the contact with new friends and new surroundings. Yes, yet how glad we were to see our own vexatious, delightful, affectionate

people once more, and to receive their welcome! They, at any rate, had no doubt at all but that their village was the happiest and the best of places to live in, and of the dwellers elsewhere they had but a poor opinion.

## A TEACHER OF NO REPUTE

TRUTH compels me to place Samuel Tarabisu among that large majority of lower grade teachers engaged in very humble processes connected with the building up of the Church in Melanesia. There was nothing in his history, training, or individuality to lift him into the higher grade. He had never been to the Mission Training College, and therefore had no university standing. He owed his education to his predecessor, a teacher who stood head and shoulders above his fellows. All the villages round used to repair to Isaac for advice and help, and when an early death removed him, the mourning was deep and universal.

In the shadow of that loss Samuel may be said to have lived. I don't think anyone ever came to *him* for advice, and I am quite sure that if anyone had come, Samuel would have been too diffident to offer any. He was so lacking in the gift of organization, that when there was church work to be done in the way of building or repair, he usually did it himself,



with the help of one or two friends. So sadly unenlightened was he, that I have known him distribute his pay as teacher in order that the people might not come empty-handed when there was an offertory. "But they had nothing to give!" was his reply to expostulation on this method of training in the duty of almsgiving. Samuel would have been the despair of any charity organization society. Yet the influence of so kindly and upright a nature must have been for good, and in a village not conspicuous for its morality, slander never breathed a word against Samuel's character.

His reputation as a teacher vanished on that unlucky day when, in the course of instruction, in a moment of aberration, he spoke of the *ten foolish virgins*! He was listened to in silence, but in the lengthy discussion that followed later in the *gamal*, or club-house, it was decided that there were certainly only five! This implied vote of censure cut Samuel to the heart, and it required much argument and persuasion before he could be induced to teach or preach again.

No one could have taken more pains than Samuel over the preparation of his sermons. At that time there was no entire Gospel translated in his own language, and Samuel's knowledge of Mota (the *lingua franca* of the

Mission) was slight, so we used to meet in the schoolhouse every Sunday afternoon, and I would translate for him the Gospel for the day, on which he usually liked to preach. He went most carefully and thoroughly into the meaning of each verse, and it was at such times that I was given glimpses of unsuspected depths and beauty in Samuel's soul. If only some of the thoughts which he expressed then could have found voice later, he would have been counted among the greater preachers of his day, but the presence of his people always had a paralyzing effect.

One Sunday we had spent nearly two hours over the parable of the unmerciful servant, which he found impossible of comprehension. I fancy he had the same sensation of something snapping in his brain when confronted with our system of debt and pressure for payment as we have when trying to understand the complicated system of native debts.

"No," said Samuel at last, "I cannot understand, yet I wished to preach on it; I will preach on the pounds instead." Now this subject was a very favourite one of Samuel's, one on which he felt at home. He taught us that those who gained ten pounds were the Apostles; those who gained five were the *ilo*



*ute* — the learned ones, amongst whom he generously placed the white women; while those who received only one pound, and did nothing with it, were the ordinary rank and file, including the congregation and himself. Samuel was far too humble-minded ever to speak of himself as other than ignorant, and always began, "I am going to preach to us." We sometimes wished that he had rather a larger measure of self-esteem, for others might then have thought more of him. Whatever the subject of the sermon might be, Samuel always finished off with the reminder that "this is the Day of Rest, given us by God, for which we should praise Him and be thankful!" We looked for this as for a familiar refrain, warning the drowsy that the sermon had reached its conclusion, and that it was time to wake up.

Samuel was not our only preacher. The teacher in charge of the district used to visit us from time to time to ensure our getting some real teaching, and he did preach very well. Perhaps on account of their simplicity, native sermons remain in one's memory when sermons from white men have vanished entirely.

I recollect well one Sunday when Peter's sermon brought home the awful fact that we had forgotten St. Luke and his festival, but Samuel

inserted the proper Collect neatly after the sermon. He was very good at that.

On this St. Luke's Day, just when we particularly wished everything to go smoothly, there were certain slight breaks. The first was Samuel's fault as precentor. He started the psalm quite successfully, but presently got a little confused over the pointing, and made the break at the first comma; then, seeing the infinite length of verse stretching before us, he lost his nerve, his voice quavered, and then sank into stillness. One or two of us boldly finished the chant at the proper break, and treated the last half as another verse; but it was with quavering voices that we sang, and how we all got through the rest of the psalm I don't know, for it was no use looking to Samuel for any more help. Shortly afterwards a back bench gave way, and there was a great subsidence of humanity. We would all so much rather it had happened when Peter was not there. However, he gave us a very good sermon on St. Luke, comparing him to a doctor who has medicines for every disease, for did not St. Luke write down in his Gospel what will cure every ill and supply every need? Samuel, with an evident desire to do tardy honour to St. Luke, gave out our Saint's Day hymn, but, after a pause for

consultation, Peter and he clearly settled that they could neither of them start it, so Samuel fell back on a favourite evening hymn which we all knew well—"Glory to Thee, my God, this night."

There was a certain Sunday on which Peter came down with three points on which to upbraid and instruct us, and at the close of his sermon he brought them out one by one.

1. We had been known to catch a fish on Sunday.

2. The big lads made too much noise, shouting as they ran.

3. Distraction was caused by tiny children in church. He suggested that the women should take it in turn to look after them and so allow the rest to enjoy the service in peace. An excellent idea, impossible to carry out.

On the following Sunday Samuel came much exercised in mind because Alice Metalailiu had seen and caught a fish, in the face of what had been laid down by Peter, and an idea had got abroad that any offender was to be put out of church in consequence. Samuel seemed to feel that he must add an explanatory note of his own to Peter's sermon: "For we cannot put her out of the church for that," he justly remarked, "though she has erred." So Samuel also added

a codicil to his sermon that evening. Towards the end of the week I went to see Alice, whom I had missed from school, and who was sitting engaged in grating manioc.

Yes, she said, Samuel had decided that she had better stay away from church for a week because she had caught a fish on Sunday, so she had stayed away from school also, but she would come again next Sunday. She agreed it was well not to catch fish on that day, but she just happened to see this one, and it seemed a pity to let it go. She was quite cheerful over the whole matter.

One of the many sweeping assertions made of the Melanesians is that they quickly forget. I think it is quite untrue, and is merely founded on the cheerfulness of their disposition, which refuses to dwell on the sorrows or the injuries of life, but the memory is still there. I recollect very well one Sunday when, apropos of nothing, Samuel remarked: "This is the day on which my brother died; I always know the day by the Collect." I asked how long it was since he died. "He died when Edwin was as big as David," was the reply, and by that I knew that it must have been ten or twelve years ago, yet all the circumstances were quite fresh in his memory.





RAGA WOMEN.



The experience of his boyhood, when his mother was one of many wives, made Samuel very sound on the subject of polygamy; one wife at a time, he considered, was quite enough. He had a very friendly feeling for his own wife, though he sometimes complained that she was lazy. Seeing, however, that Augusta was invariably carrying about on her back the youngest child, she could hardly be blamed if she occasionally lost her appetite for work. Augusta, on her side, found Samuel very trying at times. I found her one Monday in a state of extreme exasperation, Samuel having given to Peter, who had preached to us the day before, a small tin of potted meat which had been given to Augusta in return for some bit of work she had done. "It was mine," she said, "not his."

As to his children, Samuel was a most proud and affectionate father, and they were devoted to him. Speaking one day of the evil of young men marrying old wives, and of childless marriages, Samuel wound up, "For myself, I take great pleasure in Columbia and Marion and David." Indeed, they were a trio that any father might delight in.

Samuel was at his best with children, and I used to like to watch him when, somewhat irregularly it must be owned, he summoned the

infant population to afternoon school by the beating of a drum, and, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, preceded them, still beating his drum, into the school, in this case, instead of the river.

Who but Samuel would have been capable, after it had been settled that there was to be no music during Holy Week, of giving out "While shepherds watched their flocks by night," and expecting us to read the lines antiphonally! We did it, and proceeded in the evening to "The Church's one foundation." I rather think that the congregation then protested, for I don't remember dealing thus with any other hymn.

Time passed and Samuel's ailments increased, especially his rheumatism. I was away from the island for some time, and on my next visit I found him at home, lying down in much pain, but he welcomed me kindly, and waved his hand with his old parental pride to where Augusta sat nursing the latest arrival. That was my last sight of him. After that he grew gradually weaker, and realized that he could not recover. No sudden change was apparent, but he sent one day to the teacher to ask him to come and pray. Miss X followed, to find the teacher waiting, doubtful whether the end was near enough to read the Commendatory



Prayer. This vexed Samuel, and he said to Miss X, "I don't want him to wait till I am dying! I want him to read the Collect for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity and the General Thanksgiving." Thus in the spirit of penitence and praise did Samuél prepare for the one great adventure of his life, and in less than half an hour he had gone where, maybe, human limitations seem of less importance than to us.

## LEO TAMATA

I HAVE always thought that if Leo Tamata's father had been of stronger physique Leo himself might have been more of a success. Zaccheus is the only Melanesian who ever awoke in me a feeling of repulsion. This was not because he was partially paralyzed and could only walk down to the shore on his hands and feet, holding two half coconut-shells to protect his hands. It was rather his sardonic expression which became hideous when he smiled. Perhaps he had suffered and been embittered by an insufficiently strong body; he was sharp enough in brain, I fancy. Leo's mother, Susie, was of quite a different type and of good birth, being half-sister to the great Chief Viradoro. She must have been a fine woman in her day, but her gifts were rather practical than intellectual, and though she essayed to learn to read, she never got far beyond the alphabet.

Leo, their son, had a good intellect and sparks of ambition, but there was a strain of weakness which kept him back from the higher walks of life in which he would at one time have fain

trodden. His figure was slight, his shoulders and chest too narrow, his countenance intelligent and pleasant, though it too lacked strength. He came into prominence first through his talent for carpentering, having made several quite good tables for us out of empty packing-cases.

The white women's station was established solely on account of the Melanesian women, but when the men found that their wives and sisters were growing in knowledge, they were stirred to jealous emulation, and petitioned that they might be taught as well. So they were accorded a class in which Leo rose quickly to the top. He was intensely keen, and as he learned he seemed to gain fresh life and interest in everything.

My first sight and hearing of him had been in church when, owing to the illness of the teacher, he read prayers. He started the Magnificat to a chant which bore sufficient resemblance to the original to allow one to join in, but long before the Gloria was reached I became dumb, and could only marvel respectfully at the power of improvisation displayed by Leo. The chant, in fact, became a service with three of the parts absent. Every voice in that church had a chance; if the tune soared too high even for the

head-notes of a Melanesian, he or she merely held on to the last note till the air sank again to an accessible level. Perhaps, therefore, I am wrong in saying that there were no parts in Leo's service of song; there were rather too many. I remember that I had time to read through the whole of the lesson while he was finding the place, and ample time for meditation while he read it aloud slowly and carefully. But that was in his early days as Reader. Possibly, too, his recent engagement had somewhat distracted his thoughts.

Not only did Leo aspire to learning for himself, but he also aspired to a wife who had been educated by the Mission in Norfolk Island, and the first proposal ever made by letter on the island, independent of all family negotiation, was the one that Leo wrote to a certain widow living in a village on the hill. Emma's first marriage had not been one of unchequered happiness, for her husband very soon went out of his mind. Fortunately for her he wandered off one day, and was supposed, as he was never seen or heard of again, to have fallen over the cliff into the sea, leaving her with one tiny child.

Emma was one of the most attractive and delightful of women, and St. Paul would have approved of her as being "well reported of for

good works." She was invaluable in her village, teaching in the school, visiting and caring for the sick. If anything untoward happened, Emma was sent for as a matter of course. Great dismay filled the hearts of all when it was known that they were to lose her, that she had accepted Leo Tamata's proposal, also by letter.

There seemed only one thing to be done to prevent the second Norfolk Island girl in the village from being lost to them also, and the Chief came to the priest-in-charge on his next visit, and expressed the public feelings as follows: "Nicholas is not married; Rose is a widow. She will marry someone else and go away, and then what shall we do for a teacher?" Nicholas was then consulted, and lastly Rose, and as neither had any objection, the marriage eventually took place, and the village mind was set at rest.

Meantime the preparations went on for Leo's wedding. They were not elaborate. A small house was lent to them till such time as the press of garden-work was over, and Leo could build one for himself. There was a wedding shirt to be cut out and made for the bridegroom by his bride—a trifle tight as there was barely enough calico. Also there was the bride's own

dress to make. I met her about a week before the wedding, coming up from a bathe in the sea, and enquired if the dress were finished.

"Not yet," was the reply.

"Only six more days, and you will be wearing it."

Emma laughed. "Why should I be wearing it?" she asked.

"You know why!" said I, whereat she laughed again, and said: "No, I don't know," and then remarked that her back was painful, and would I rub it.

However, notwithstanding her pretended ignorance of the matter, the marriage took place the next week. The wedding attracted a large concourse of people. The bridegroom had managed to struggle into his shirt, and the bride looked very well in her new dress. In her hand was a pocket handkerchief of large size, ornamented with a coloured frieze of bicycles, and this she held bashfully up to her face. Immediately after the ceremony the happy pair separated for the rest of the day, according to Melanesian etiquette.

Not many days after, we took tea with the bride, having intimated to her that we should like to do so. We went about four o'clock, carrying a small bag in which was stowed some



tea, sugar, biscuits, and a tin of sardines. The house was very small, and the doorway so narrow that we had to remove our sun-hats, and even squeeze a little to get through. But, though small, it was very neat; a line was strung across one end from wall to wall, and clothes hung tidily upon it, while a new coconut mat had been laid on the floor to serve as a seat.

After a little talk, Emma asked, by way of formula, if we wished for tea, to which we replied that we did. Whereupon her small daughter Mary brought some sticks, and in a few seconds Emma produced a bright little fire over which she suspended a "billie" (a wedding gift) tied with fibre, and in an incredibly short time the water boiled. We produced our store and the four of us sat and partook, with the mat for our dining table and seat combined. Emma was a little shy, but tilted the tea very deftly into the pannikins. We ate the sardines in our fingers, and the repast was a great success.

After Christmas Leo set to work in earnest upon their house, the neighbours assisted as usual, and a fine large one was erected near to that of his father. It was quite up to date with a table and a bench, and—most advanced of all—no pig to share their roof!

Up till then, Leo had always appeared the



most peaceable of beings, as his name Tamata (peace) implied, one who would be more ready to take than to inflict a blow. What, then, was our surprise when one day he walked past carrying a gun and looking furious! A moment or two later he and old Timothy were seen talking and gesticulating fiercely at the door of the *gamal*, or men's club-house. After a time the altercation seemed to cease as suddenly as it had begun, and the next thing we saw was old Timothy high up in a tree taking a wash in one of the convenient holes, filled with rain water, which serve as baths for the neighbourhood.

It transpired later on that Timothy had accused Leo of stealing his coconuts. Now the coconut-trees had belonged to an uncle, who died when Leo was a child, and Timothy, as a near relation, had a right to the nuts until Leo should be grown up. There was no doubt about Leo being grown up, but Timothy, having spent some labour on the ground around the trees, seemed unwilling to concede Leo's undoubted claims. Moreover, Timothy had given, or sold, one of the deceased's pigs, and Leo demanded another in return. As the right was on Leo's side, it was adjudged that Timothy must grant him a pig, and this had made him very angry. Fortunately he did not carry out

his threat of striking Leo, or the gun might have gone off.

All these interesting details were given me in the evening by Elise, Timothy's wife, when I was bathing her eyes; and, as we were talking, old Timothy came by, very stiff and proud, poor old dear, for he had been a great fighting man in his time and of some importance, and it was galling to his pride to have been convicted of wrong.

Emma having been educated at Norfolk Island and Leo now being recognized as second teacher, he aspired to college education at Norfolk Island for himself, and began to study Mota (the *lingua franca* of our central schools) very earnestly with a view to this. Indeed, what with study, carpentry, and gardening, his time was fully occupied, and I think this must have been the happiest period of his life. The old couple, too, experienced the benefit of having Emma as a daughter-in-law, for she nursed Susie through an attack of pneumonia, and was constantly helping them in one way or another. And after a time a great hope came into their married life, which would crown their happiness.

It was somewhere about this period that Leo was suddenly called upon one Sunday to preach the weekly sermon, Samuel having fallen ill, as

was his wont, at a particularly inconvenient moment, and a deputation waited on Leo requesting him to preach in his stead. "But I can't do it!" protested Leo, and came to us in much perturbation of mind. We encouraged him to our utmost, reminding him that it was still Eastertide, a subject about which he could surely speak.

We attended service that night in some uncertainty ourselves as to how the preacher would preach. Alas, poor Leo! His agony of shyness was such that his sermon consisted practically of these words: "I have been told to preach to us, but I am incapable of doing so, but this I know, that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and has given us life." Having reiterated his belief three or four times, Leo stopped abruptly and gave out the hymn, while our tense nerves relaxed.

The congregation, according to custom, lingered outside the church, and was still there when the melancholy figure of the preacher was seen emerging from the "house of clothes," as the vestry is termed. Then an exquisite action of courtesy was performed by the chief man there; he went forward to meet Leo, shook his hand gravely, and said that the sermon was beautiful; and indeed many a time have I longed

for something as short and pithy as Leo's first effort.

So time wore on, and as the year drew to a close the only cloud on the horizon was the unsatisfactory state of Emma's health. She used to come over now and then, and sit rather wearily on our verandah, complaining of pain in her back; and finally she moved up to her old home, thinking that the air on the hill might do her good, so for some time we only saw her occasionally.

It was at the end of a weekly class which I held for the wives of teachers that one of them electrified me by saying that Emma had returned home, and that her son had been born dead the previous day. No one had told us, though we had talked to little Mary in the evening. It all seemed very extraordinary, and I went off at once to see if it was true.

As I went Zaccheus called to me from his doorway, where he was sitting with an even more sardonic smile than usual. "She killed her child," he said, "by fire, and so she lies all alone. Leo will not speak to her, nor the people; she killed her child." Not knowing in the least what he meant, I took no notice and went on. There, sure enough, was poor Emma, all alone, and very weak and ill. She told me that Leo

had been dreadfully disappointed and very angry, and said it was her fault that the baby did not live. I asked her what Zaccheus meant about the fire, and she replied that the other night she had earache very badly and could not sleep for pain. She walked up and down, and finally lay down near the place where they had been cooking, and scorched her skirt with one of the hot stones.

“That is why they say the baby was killed. But you know how I wanted a child!” continued poor Emma, to whose own sorrow nobody seemed to give a thought.

So I went on to find Leo, who was gloomily mending the fence. Poor lad, he had gone through a bad time, having to bury the little son for whose coming he had so looked forward, and then to be told that Emma had killed it. However, he very gladly accepted the new point of view, and the fence went unmended that day while he looked after his wife.

But more than a fortnight went by, and Emma seemed to grow weaker instead of stronger. It was just three days before Christmas when I found her one early morning in a state of collapse after a very bad night.

It was a strange death-chamber. Children played in a corner, and one tiny mite was laid



down on the floor by its mother, and given a large knife to play with, to keep it happy and quiet. Relations and friends kept dropping in, and late in the evening they brought a number of palm-leaves and laid them on the ground in preparation for an all-night watch. Then Samuel came in and read the prayers for the dying. It was a very moving sight—some five-and-twenty people kneeling to support their friend through her last trouble as she had helped so many in theirs.

As there was nothing further that could be done, I went home, but going out on to the verandah to listen for any sound before retiring to rest, I heard the death-wail, and a torch appeared, carried by poor Leo in tears, with a book in his other hand, to say that she had gone, and was there a prayer that he could read? I went back with him, and there lay Emma, all the distress gone from her face, in the last quiet sleep. Leo read the prayer in a fairly steady voice, and there was perfect stillness while he prayed and for a few moments afterwards. He then fetched a little bundle in which was Emma's new dress for Christmas, and it was he who put it on while others supported her. The death-wail began again while he was doing this, and Emma's sister started the chant, "Sister, you



have gone! We shall not see you again! Sister, sister!" the others joining in with a low wailing accompaniment. It was a Christian adaptation of an old heathen dirge, very plaintive and haunting. And thus Emma lay, dressed in exquisite cleanliness, as she would have wished, for her last resting-place. Then a large mat was spread and the body laid temporarily upon it and covered with a piece of white calico by her sister, who stroked her tenderly as she did this.

There was nothing of the cold cheerlessness of death in the atmosphere, it was rather the homely preparation of a much-loved member of the family for her long journey.

But the preparation was not finished. It was old Susie's turn now, and she brought a large bundle which, unfolded, proved to be four very large and beautiful burial-mats, and these were laid one upon another along the centre of the house. Next was spread a blanket, then a large blue-and-white quilt (another modern touch), and on the top of all the white calico covering. Upon this pile they laid the body very reverently, and then folded over it the calico and the quilt, which done they all sat round on either side and at the head and feet, and the dirge recommenced. Indeed, they might well be sad, for one of the

best and most unselfish of women had gone from them.

The next day was Christmas Eve, and we had hoped that the priest-in-charge would have arrived in time to give Emma her last Communion, but he was only in time for the funeral. In the early morning I found the womenfolk were watching still, while the mats had been folded over and tied with native string.

Then came the procession of bearers, including Emma's brother, followed by the priest. He first said a prayer in the house, and then they bore her into the church, and laid her on two forms in front of the altar. I wondered how far the beautiful words of the lesson were understood by the hearers; something must have been intelligible, though much would be beyond them.

In those days there was no cemetery. The grave had been dug near at hand in some ground belonging to the chief man of the village. There she was laid, lowered by ropes of the same native fibre. Then we sang the funeral hymn, and palm-leaves were laid in the grave; and so we left her in sure and very certain hope of a joyful resurrection.

Almost the last words I had heard her say were, "No, I am not afraid."

We went away for Christmas, and when we

returned we found that Leo had made a wooden cross, and only waited till he could get some blacking from us to write the name and date. He was still very sad, and I think something went out of him in the way of "vim" and ambition, never to return.

Later on he went up to Norfolk Island as he had so wished to do, but made no mark there. Local lights were apt to pale into disappointing insignificance beside the more brilliant luminaries from other islands.

Not many years after came the news of Leo Tamata's death. He was never very robust, but one could not help wondering whether, had Emma lived, he might not have gained a high place among the teachers, for he had certain gifts and a desire to achieve. As it is, he stands among the many, who just lack one necessary quality and so fall short of attainment. Perhaps he has gained it now.

## A SANTA CRUZ SCHOLAR

SHE came to us on the ship's return from her first voyage: and I ought to have prefaced this remark by saying that, in the days of this story, the headquarters of the Melanesian Mission were still at Norfolk Island, where the girl scholars were assigned to various houses, and placed under the charge of "white mothers," of whom I happened to be one. Being busy with other arrivals, I did not see her for a day or two, but the girls told me that a family had come up from Santa Cruz, consisting of Henry Lambe, his wife Emily, and two children, Helen and Alan, and that Helen had a bad sore on her leg and was going into the hospital.

I had been much interested in hearing of the arrival, as no girl had come from Santa Cruz for some years, and having an errand at the hospital shortly afterwards, I asked leave of Sister Kate to visit her new patient. On going in I found a very starved-looking little figure lying on the bed asleep. The face was not pretty, but it somehow took hold of my heart; and when in a moment or two the long eyelashes

were lifted, and the dark Melanesian eyes looked into mine with the scared gaze of a wild animal, I felt suddenly that the child had been sent to me personally, one of those curious convictions that come to one occasionally without any apparent reason. We neither of us knew the other's language, but we made friends over the mysterious sound of my watch, like the noise of an insect, when no insect was there.

The sore was a very large one and in a terrible condition, and for some days Helen stayed in the hospital, though she proved a great addition to Sister Kate's cares, for the child was very unhappy alone, and was constantly trying to escape into the larger ward, and the boys used to hear her weeping miserably in the early morning.

I went down to see her at every opportunity, and ever the wish grew stronger within me to take her into my household just as she was.

To my surprise and pleasure, permission for this was granted, and I went to try and break the news to Helen. I found her crouched down behind the screen, hiding from the doctor, and looking more than ever like a little wild animal. She had got to know me well and always had a smile in readiness, but our communication was only as yet by means of signs, and although I



tried to make her understand that I was going to take her to live with me, it was with but partial success.

Not till I was crossing the paddock on my way home did I remember I had said nothing to my family about the newcomer, and a doubt arose in my mind as to how the news would be received, for Melanesian girls are very jealous, and not always disposed to give strangers a warm welcome. I had taken one of them, Ellen, down to the hospital to see the doctor, and she was now walking home with me, holding my hand. It was about her approval that I had my gravest doubts. She came from the island where my brother was working, had been baptized by him, and given my name. I knew that she considered herself as especially my child, and feared she might resent another "Ellen," as they called her, being brought into the family.

I plunged at once into the subject. "Ellen," said I, "the little girl from Santa Cruz is coming to live with us; she is coming to-day."

Ellen's face assumed the expression I had feared. "*Gate maros!*" was her reply. I knew she would say it. Now the English equivalent, "I don't like," is no true rendering of words with so various and always emphatic a meaning as "*Gate maros!*" "Shan't!" "Won't!" "It is



detestable!" "It must not be!" "He (or she) is repulsive to me!"—all these rebellious feelings find complete expression in those two short words.

"But," I said, "she is very lonely in the hospital. When you came you had Bessie with you, and Sarah and Emily were close to you in another house; but supposing you had come all alone, and there had been no one you knew to welcome you, and supposing you had had a very big sore, and been put in the hospital, how would you have liked it?"

Ellen had to own that she would not have liked it at all.

"Her name is not *Ellen*, but *Helen*," I added artfully, "which is quite different; and if you think about it a little, I am sure you will be glad to have her."

The rest of the family, to my great relief, were quite agreeable, and all anxious to go and help pull Helen up the hill, especially Betenglé from Motalava, who possessed all the vivacity and go which characterize that island. She highly approved of the plan, said she had seen Helen, and pronounced her "*We wia!*" which in modern English would be rendered, "She's all right." In the midst of our discussion little Ellen came up to me, and said rather shyly that she would

like to go too; so it ended in six of the family setting forth together.

We found Helen prepared for the journey, her worldly goods contained in a small calico bag which Sister Kate had given her, and, clasped in her arms, a doll which had also been presented to her. I think the doll afforded her some solace that afternoon, but I never saw her take any notice of it again, only, long after, the girls brought me a dilapidated specimen of dollhood, saying, "This belonged to Helen." I can see the little band now, laughing and chattering as they pushed and pulled the old chair up the hill, without a care in their minds, as happy as crickets; for all those happy, careless days are over, and of that band of merry girls all but one have exchanged them for exceeding gladness and greater knowledge in a higher school.

For the first week or two things went on very quietly, the girls not taking much notice of her, with the exception of Betenglé, and Helen still dumb except when her mother, Emily, paid her daily visit. I tried to pick up a few words, but the sound of the Santa Cruz language is extraordinarily difficult to catch. Helen used to spend all the day on the verandah, and with good food and regular attention her leg got steadily better.

One afternoon I heard wild weeping there, and, on going out, found Alan lifting up his voice in protesting despair at having been left alone by his mother, all Helen's efforts to quiet him being in vain. Happily I possessed an unfailing panacea for childish woes in the shape of a large tin of ginger-nuts, and, as soon as Alan could take an interval sufficiently long to permit of his tasting one, the tears lessened, the cloud of despair lifted, and he discovered that he was in quite a nice place after all. From that time he spent part of each day with us while the others were in school.

Then came a terrible day, when the girls came back from dinner with scared faces, to tell me that little Alan had been badly burnt. I told them to say nothing to Helen, and ran down to the hospital at once. There lay the dear little round figure I had known so well, all bound up with bandages, his face almost unrecognizable, and moaning terribly.

All had been done that could be done, but the shock had been too great, and the little life was ebbing fast. Close by him stood Henry and Emily, beside themselves with grief. It seemed that, contrary to Henry's express orders, Emily had lighted a fire in their wee house under the pines, where the married people lived,

and had gone off to dinner in the hall, believing everything to be safe as she shut the door. And so it would have been on Santa Cruz, where the the child would have had no clothes on: but he managed to get in somehow, and went, it is supposed, to the fire over which food was cooking. His frock caught fire, and when the people returned from dinner it was to see little Alan in flames at the doorway.

In an hour's time all his suffering was over.

Helen's first entry into chapel was at the funeral next day. She looked a poor little waif among them all, understanding nothing of the service, and looking at everything with startled eyes, crying whenever Henry and Emily did, but not realizing in the least what it meant. Helen was very sad for many days after. But Betenglé was very good to her—picked up a few words of Santa Cruz which she flung at her, quite regardless of their meaning, teased and played with her, and was repaid by Helen's whole-hearted devotion. For Betenglé's teasing never went too far.

One afternoon, about a week later, I was greeted on my return from some errand by the news, "Helen has gone down under the pines all alone! We told her it was not allowed, but she did not listen."

"Perhaps she did not understand you," I said, and went after Helen, knowing that neither of her parents was indoors. I met her returning up the hill, weeping bitter tears. "Did you want to see Henry and Emily?" I asked.

She shook her head.

I was puzzled for a moment, then a light flashed on me. "Did you think you would see Alan there?"

She nodded, but another big sob prevented her saying anything.

It was only a few evenings later when she set off again, but this time on a different errand. Sister Kate, from the hospital, was having tea with me and we were discussing Helen, when the head girl came hurriedly to the French window to say that Helen was going back to her people! Sure enough, there was the child, coming along wrapped in her little shawl, with calico bag in hand, shaking off the dust of her feet, so to speak, against us. It appeared, on enquiry, that one of the elder girls had been teasing her in clumsy fashion, playfully dashing aside her spoon each time she lifted it to her mouth. Helen failed to see any joke at all, and taking it for the deliberate act of an enemy, decided in her hasty fashion to depart at once to



where she could eat her food in peace. It did not take long to put matters straight, to comfort Helen, and to point out to Isabella, who was genuinely sorry, that her joke was ill-timed, and we all settled down once more to our respective meals.

And now Helen began to develop and grow stronger and more interesting every day. As the doctor did not wish her to walk far yet, she was perforce my companion when the rest were out or at school; but her affection fully repaid one for any little trouble she might have been. Indeed, I think it was more than repaid by her first spontaneous Mota words, when she came up to me one morning, and laying her cheek softly against my arm, said: "*Ko we tang-o anéané!*" (You are very nice!)

After that beginning Helen soon talked with tolerable fluency. Santa Cruzians have, possibly, more thirst for information than others; certainly Helen was the only child who ever asked me questions about my own home. She would come to me in the evening while the others were doing their preparation work, and sit on the floor by the fire till sleep overcame her, when she would curl herself up with the bellows for her pillow, and sleep till I roused her for evening prayers and bed.



In Helen's case, more perhaps than in any other, did one feel that prayer was the one means by which to reach and train her. She was so ignorant, and, with her still slender knowledge of Mota, it was so difficult to give her much definite teaching. She used to love all Bible pictures about our Lord, but how much she understood I never knew; probably she absorbed more than one guessed. She used to say her prayers with me at first till she knew them by heart, and I often wondered how much she thought of the meaning of the words she was saying. In fact, she was very far from being the earnest little Christian child that one reads of in missionary records, the wonder and the joy of her teachers: on the contrary, she caused her teachers a good deal of vexation.

Worst of all the troubles was a habit she had of carrying everything clasped in her arms instead of on her head or her back as everyone else did, a habit which soiled the front of her print frocks shockingly. In Santa Cruz, where frocks are not commonly worn, it does not matter where or how you carry things, but on Norfolk Island it was a very different matter, and I was always (and with perfect truth) being told that Helen was not fit to be seen. In vain I warned her; she invariably forgot when firewood or anything

else had to be fetched. And the cry still arose, "Helen is not fit to be seen!"

It really was a problem: given two frocks for wash and wear, what are you to do? To wear a Sunday frock on a weekday would be a greater crime even than a grubby front. To present a clean appearance on two was impossible in a climate where you could not command an un-failing procession of drying days. To give a third would be a rewarding of vice. I thought I would try one more talking to on the subject. So one Saturday evening, as a suitable time for reviewing the sins of the week, I spoke more seriously than ever: what I said in my charge I don't remember, except that I pointed out the disgrace that it brought on me, too, when one of the family went about with her frock in such a grubby condition. Helen listened with sorrowful attention, and was very silent all the rest of the evening. She acted on my words next day in a way I did not expect.

It was Sunday, and I was sitting writing for the mail, when a deputation waited upon me, their countenances expressive of the most virtuous horror. "Helen is washing clothes!"

"Washing clothes?" I repeated in amazement. "Where?"

"In the wash-house!"

Thither I repaired, and as I drew near sounds of strenuous energy met my ear, and on opening the door, there, sure enough, was Helen hard at work, herself and the frock on which she was engaged one glorious mass of soapsuds, and if not clean, most thoroughly wet. She looked up with a beaming countenance, feeling sure that she would get a word of praise now for doing her best to atone for the sins of the past, and to present an immaculate appearance for the future. Of course, I did give her full praise for that, but was obliged to point out that it was our rule never to wash clothes on Sunday if we could possibly help it. I think she remained sorely puzzled why what was a crowning virtue on Saturday should become a transgression on Sunday, and why a righteous deed might not be performed every day.

It was about this time that the ship arrived from Auckland on her way to the islands, and took Henry and Emily back. Poor Emily had been in low spirits for some time, as she was convinced she would be shot on her return for having caused the death of Alan, especially as (if I remember rightly) an uncle of his was intending to adopt him. All seemed to think that Emily had sound grounds for her apprehensions.

I tried to comfort her by saying that the Bishop would protect her, but she only shook her head. At last I said, as I have often said before and since with increasing conviction as experience has proved the truth of the words: "See, Emily, you pray to God every day, and I will too; and I am sure that He will not allow them to shoot you."

When Henry and I shook hands he said: "If we live, I wish Helen to come down by the first voyage next year, and return to you by the last; but if we should die, she is to stay with you always."

It was quite wonderful, in the weeks that followed, to see how steadily her character developed. She became a universal favourite in the house, always ready to help, and so merry and ready for games, while in the house she became most efficient in all odd jobs. She was wonderfully thoughtful, too, and affectionate, and always came straight to me when school was over: nor did the others resent it, but just accepted it as Helen's way. It was not that she stayed more than a minute or so, but just to show herself, and see if I wanted anything.

She was trained through prayer and love, and nothing else, and that was why she grew steadily. Sister Kate and I used often to talk about her,

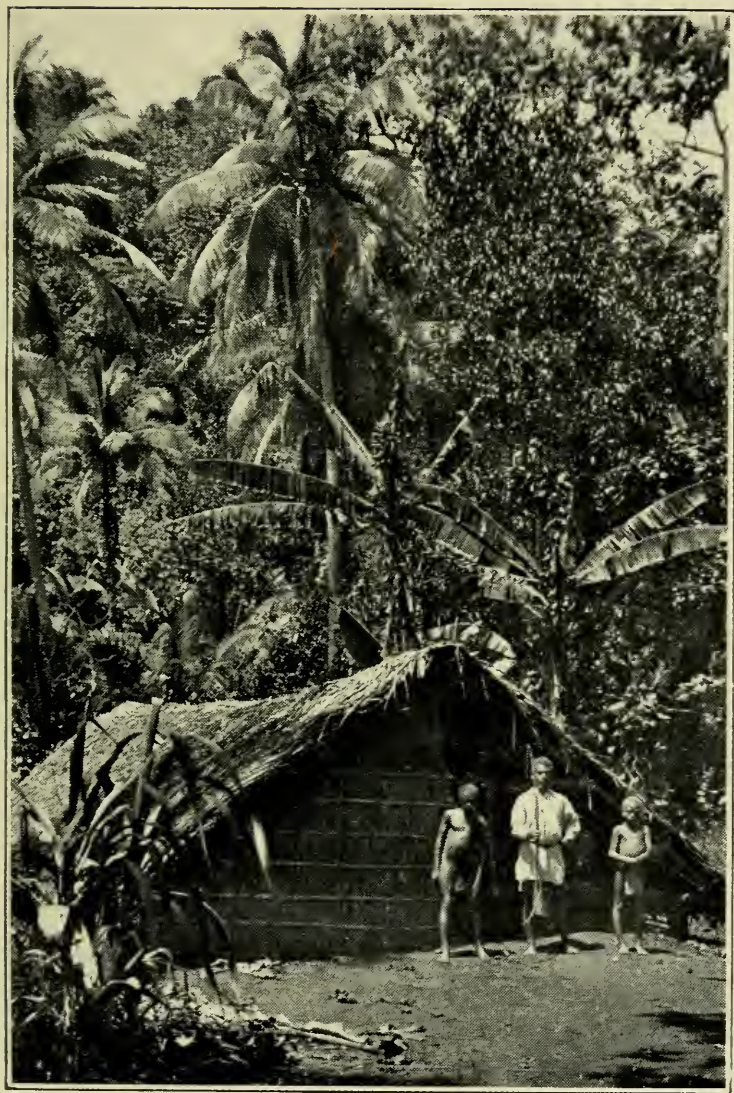
and the wonderful influence she might wield in the future as the wife of a teacher; and we felt more and more that she had been sent for some special purpose. So, I am sure, she was, though we shall not know that purpose for some little time yet.

When the ship returned in November, it was with the news that Emily had been taken ill suddenly one night, not long before reaching Santa Cruz, and had died after a few hours' illness; so had God answered our prayer, and saved her from the fate that would almost certainly have been hers.

One beautiful moonlight night stands out in my memory, when Ellen and Helen and I sat together on the verandah, and Ellen told us about her home at Heuru, and the gardens and the fishing; and Helen had crooned her quaint little Santa Cruz song of the sun and the moon and the rain, the words of which I regret so much that I did not write down. It was a particularly happy evening, and when it was over Helen said: "We will sit here again to-morrow!" But "to-morrow" was wet, and we never sat there again, for the next full moon shone down on little Helen's grave.

It was at this time that some cases of mumps appeared, which spread rapidly, and in a few





NATIVE HOUSE, LAMALANGA, RAGA.





instances turned to meningitis. Helen was amongst those who developed mumps, but it seemed only a mild attack. Then one morning I went into the sitting-room where the family was assembled, and noticed that Helen was absent. The girls said she was still asleep. To be asleep at that hour was not usual, and my companion went to see if anything were the matter. Presently she came back with a grave face to say she was afraid the child was ill. I had her moved at once into my sitting-room, and the moment I saw her a pang seized me. I knew she was going. It was meningitis, and from the first the doctor gave little hope. When she was laid down, she asked for water; those were the only words she spoke, and the only sign of recognition she gave was a pressure of the hand.

And early on Tuesday morning little Helen passed out into the Light, called back by her Father.

At first it seemed hard to see why, but now I think she was merely sent to us to learn our lesson of love and service, and having learnt that, she was sent for into the Higher School to learn other things which we could not teach her.

## BIRO

THE sun was shining bright and hot on the coast of Mala, in the Solomon Islands, and Biro said to himself that it was just the day for paddling out to the reef, seeing that it was low tide, and there would be plenty of shell-fish left behind in the pools on the low reef, which would make very good eating. It was true that the mission ship was expected any day, and that he himself was to be picked up and taken on to school ; but Biro was accustomed to live only in the present, and not to worry about the future—except where malignant spirits were concerned. So, after trying vainly to persuade his friend Keresia to accompany him, he paddled off alone, and was soon happily oblivious to everything outside the reef, with its pools and fish and warm salt water.

Meanwhile the *Southern Cross* came in, and, being in a hurry, was not at all disposed to wait for one little boy. Five others were picked up, and the anchor was about to be weighed when Keresia's pleading face appeared, intimating that he wished to be taken instead of Biro. There

was a moment of hesitation, and then a voice said: "Oh, well, let him come, it can't make much difference!" and Keresia joyfully joined the other boys. So when Biro returned it was to find that the ship and Keresia had both departed. He did not mind much about the ship, but he did wish that Keresia had not gone.

However, six months later the ship reappeared, and this time Biro was ready, and was picked up with his luggage, which consisted of a small fishing-basket hung round his neck. His entire outfit consisted of the *malo* (loin-cloth) which he was wearing. After a short voyage he was landed at the mission school, there to be greeted cheerfully by Keresia. He then received a bewilderingly large accession to his wardrobe in the shape of two blue *malos* for week-days, and a red one for Sundays, a singlet, a belt, and a towel, and was made acquainted with his bed-place in one of the houses near.

A wild enough little heathen was Biro, afraid of all white ways, and with a thick shock of hair which it was very soon decided must be cut to reasonable length. Keresia, who by this time was quite settled down, was ordered to take the scissors and to act as barber, whereupon Biro took promptly to the bush. For what if someone should pick up one of the shorn locks, and

therewith make magic to work him harm? At tea, therefore, the same shock of hair appeared, making a wild-looking frame to Biro's small face.

"Keresia, why did you not cut Biro's hair?"

"He refused," was the reply.

"You must cut it to-morrow; it is much too long."

Once more Biro fled. Then it occurred to Authority that fear was the reason of his disobedience, and Keresia, on being asked, said yes, it was true, that was the reason. So Keresia was told to explain to Biro that no one at the school would make an evil charm out of his hair, and that if he did not part with some of it, a punishment would follow. This being explained to him, Biro reluctantly gave in, but saw to it that every scrap was picked up and carefully burnt.

For a few weeks his time was a good deal occupied in battles with Manumae, a boy stronger than himself and therefore usually the victor—unless the fight were discovered and stopped, which meant a compulsory retreat to their houses till permission was given to come out again.

One day they were in the midst of a hot battle in which Biro, who was by this time sturdier and stronger, felt that at last he was

holding his own, and even gaining ground. But, as ill luck would have it, Authority came suddenly down the path, and seemed more angry than usual, so that he and Manumae were presently making very fast speed indeed for their respective houses, in which they were told to stop until they were called. But Biro felt that he could not possibly do that, since there was no knowing what the eventual call might forebode. The bush was always the safest place when there was any danger about, and to the bush he fled. There was not very much of it, but you could quite comfortably hide there and go to sleep.

The afternoon wore on ; Biro awoke to the consciousness that the bell must have rung for tea, for the dusk had begun to gather. Now the bush took on another aspect, and became a place of terror. The malice of evil spirits was worse than a white man's wrath : he resolved to go back. Biro was beginning to feel cold, and the inside of him was uncomfortably empty.

Back he came, and saw by the lights in the hall that school was beginning ; oh, well, then no one would trouble about him ! He crept into the kitchen where a few red embers were still burning on the hearth, stirred them together, and putting an empty case as near the fire as he



could, sat down thereupon and tried to warm himself. But it was no use, he still shivered with the cold, and felt very, very miserable. What would Authority do to him now, after this last piece of disobedience? Slow tears began to roll down his cheeks. Oh, why had he ever left Mala?

At this moment a step was heard, and a voice—"Is that you, Biro?"—and someone came in and sat down beside him on the box. It was not the Authority, but the white woman-teacher; her voice sounded kind, and he certainly felt he wanted somebody. Also she appeared to understand that he had only run away because he was frightened, and then she felt his arms and his head, and said he had better get into his blanket, and that he mustn't cry any more, or be afraid that Authority would beat him.

Then came a glorious and memorable holiday when they ran over to the other side of the little island, and found a large pool left by the tide and full of fish, more than they could well carry away. What a day that was of cooking and eating; fires all over the place, and a delicious smell of fish everywhere! There were even more fish than they could eat, so they took over a hundred to the opposite village on the main island, where the people were overjoyed to see

them, and gave them seventy *pana* (a favourite native vegetable) in exchange. Truly that was a red-letter day, when you went to bed feeling that if you ate one morsel more you would burst.

Then school was not too bad when Biro could read and write, and he wrote very well indeed, either to dictation, or in a copy. But when it came to putting down what he had read or been told, his pen did not go so readily, while Keresia seemed to have no difficulty at all in filling his slate.

But things were worse when it was his cook-week. Biro hated cooking, and hated still more, if possible, the cutting and the carrying of fire-wood when he wanted to be after fish. And one day a black spirit certainly got hold of him, for he ran away into the bush and left the wood for the others to cut. He was, as we know, always glad to be in the bush if he could not be on the shore. Indeed, the bush was a delightful place during the day, with the big trees shutting out the hot sun, and the lizards running through the grass, and the butterflies hovering among the bushes: and there was a chance, too, of catching a *qii*, the bird with red crest and legs and the strong bill, which eats the root crops, and for a dead specimen of which Authority gave sixpence, and threepence for one of its eggs.

In the late afternoon Biro stole back to the kitchen, took some cooked rice, and made off again; but this time he was seen by indignant cooks, and Authority was told, who sent two boys to bring the culprit back. But this made Biro angry, and he foolishly resisted, though he might have known it would be no good. Of course, it only led to Authority coming out with a cane, and presently Biro felt sore both outside and in, and the worst of it was that he knew the caning was just, because he had been slacking for a long time.

No one could possibly call Biro anything but a heathen still, yet he did begin to wish to be better, and he really improved in many ways. Then came Christmas, which meant a day of almost perfect happiness, with quantities of food, including a chunk of cake in the middle of the day, and a visit from Father Christmas in the evening—a strange old man with a long white beard and a gruff voice, from whom Biro fled in terror the first time, and even now kept his seat with some difficulty. Father Christmas went as suddenly as he came, but he brought all sorts of nice things with him; fish-lines, pencils, knives, handkerchiefs, writing-paper, etc., and to end up with there were nice, sticky, sugar lollies. Later on you were able to swap any-

thing you did not particularly want with another boy: Father Christmas would never be the wiser, for he only came once a year.

With the New Year Biro certainly did turn over a new leaf—no more running away into the bush, and more diligence in work. And before long came Lent, when everybody gave up, if they liked, some one article of food, and were given the value in money to send to boys in England who had no father and mother, nor—incredible as it might seem—even the smallest share in any garden ground! There was a long consultation as to what should be given up, whether sugar, coconut, pawpaw, bananas, or fish. Sugar represented the greatest self-denial and the most money. Biro decided that he would give up bananas, as he did not care for them much; and one boy, who had not quite grasped the idea, gave up bread-fruit, of which there was none at that time nor likely to be. One voice was heard murmuring: “Eat a little bit on Saturday,” but was howled down. When the decision was made the head cooks took the list in to the Authority, who kept a copy of it till Easter Eve, when the value of the food was returned to each boy in money. This was put into the offertory bag on Easter Day, and sent later to those unfortunate boys without a garden.

Long weeks afterwards, a letter of thanks would arrive, and be pinned up in the hall for each and all to read.

Ah, but there stretched six long weeks of weary self-denial before Easter, in which there were only six Sundays for happy relaxation. True, yet no boy ever thought of breaking his rule ; it was to him a solemn vow, and should the cooks add sugar by mistake to his plate of rice, nothing would induce him to touch it. Once only did a very little boy drink his tea into which sugar had been put, with the result that he was knocked down flat by an indignant elder on coming out, and no voice demurred.

Lent wore away, and Holy Week came with its unusual quiet, and now beautiful pictures were shown in church each night. For the first time Biro seemed to enter into the meaning of it all, and began to wish for the new life, which was to be obtained through Baptism. His holiday was near at hand, and it was understood that when he returned he should prepare for Baptism with one or two other boys.

But when Biro found himself at home in the old semi-heathen surroundings (for neither of his parents was baptized) the things that he had learnt at school grew dim and faded out of his



mind, while the freedom of the village life and its customs took hold of him again. And so when a recruiting ship came along, looking out for strong and healthy boys like himself, and when his people urged him to go that he might bring back some money, Biro forgot all about his good resolutions, his school, his cricket, and playmates, and signed on for two years.

The two years passed. Biro came back, but he was ashamed to write, or ask if he might return to school, so he just stopped at home for a time, and then signed on again.

But at last he determined to come home and settle down, and now old memories began to stir, the old wistful desire for the new and better life returned—a life he had not found on the plantations—and it was Biro himself at last who, following a persistent urge within his heart, joined the class of catechumens. It was during the time of his preparation for Baptism that he went with a party to another island to buy pigs, and on the way they put in at the mission station for water. There he saw once again the old Authorities, and they seemed so extraordinarily glad to see him that Biro wished he had not stayed away for so long. He told them how he had bought a wife, and they sent her a present of calico; and when he had said goodbye, and



was going away down the path to the landing-place, he just turned round once to glance back at the house, and lo! there they were standing on the verandah, looking after him as if they still cared.

## MANUMAE

IT seems only the other day that he came to us, a little round-faced boy with a merry ringing laugh and a voice like a lark; I have never heard its like in Melanesia before or since. He was one of the first contingent of boys from Mala to attend the school, and it was well for us that we had them from the start, for Mala boys act like fruit-salts on the atmosphere, producing a fizz at once. Other islands are more passive and indolent, while Mala is full of life and go.

Manumae was of a fighting nature, and one of my earliest memories is a picture of him and another Mala boy standing up on the beach hurling stones furiously at each other. Authority intervened and sent them to their respective houses, hurrying reluctantly, if such an expression may be used, to renew the fight another day like two quarrelsome little dogs. There was a strong mutual antagonism, and "Manumae and Biro are fighting again!" was a constant refrain in those early days. With the rest of the boys he

was on the best of terms, and was a popular little fellow.

Yams, with *kumaras* and *panas*, formed the staple food of the boys, but there was a short season when bread-fruit came as a welcome treat and variety. The trees had never been pruned, and had consequently grown to a great height, so that the gathering of the fruit was not easy. Only the best climbers were sent, and among these Manumae was the foremost. For all his pride and pluck, I think it must have been a strain on him, for the only occasions on which he ever became inert was after one of these exploits. He would sit perfectly still and apathetic, not a word or a smile to be got out of him. By the evening he was himself again.

The trees and undergrowth of the bush had all been cleared away around the school buildings, but one big tree, a *kiolo*, had been left on the shore. It was not only a delight to the eye, and fragrant at times with its white blossom, but was also a popular roosting-place for the boys, who used to sit along the lower massive boughs, while high up a pair of birds had made their nest. We all called them "Dicks," not then knowing their proper name of *mina*, and unaware too that they were the only birds pro-

tected by law. Their plumage is black, and their beak and feet a brilliant orange. Their note is very raucous—something between the caw of a rook and the miow of a cat, but during the courting season they cultivate a beautiful mellow note which must be irresistible. We all took the deepest interest in the nest, delighted that the couple had chosen our tree. Alas, one morning our sky was overcast by the discovery of a black deed. “The little birds are crying in the tree,” announced one of the Mala boys; “The old birds are dead.” Then it transpired that one of the youngest of the Bugotu boys had gone to a Bugotu workman, and asked him to kill these two beautiful birds. He had readily complied, and the two climbed up and caught the parents while two other boys waited below. They then proceeded to the boat-house, cooked and ate them, quite callous to the sufferings of the fledglings. The workman’s excuse, which he seemed to consider as all sufficient, was that the child had asked him to do it!

Then it was that Manumae came to the rescue. He climbed up, and brought down the orphans, made a snug little nest for them under the thatch of the kitchen, and took them under his care, feeding them on pawpaw. One of them was weakly from the first, and did not live long,

but the other grew and thrived under its foster-father's care. It learned to fly in due time, and became very tame, one day even flying into the hall where school was going on. Then a curious thing happened; after hopping along in a friendly way from boy to boy, Dick arrived at the murderer of its parents and promptly bit him—to the extreme satisfaction of all his virtuous school-fellows! The bitten one pretended not to care, but it was evident that he felt uneasy in mind. After that Dick took to regular attendance at school, hopping from head to head, and looking deeply interested in the proceedings. He stayed with us until the call of the blood became too strong, and he began to practise his courting notes daily until they were perfect, when he flew away to find and win his mate.

Manumae all this time was growing in height and in knowledge, and the time came when he was promoted to the Sunday class held in church instead of the picture-school held in the hall. I remember how on the first Sunday of his new dignity, he lingered at the door of the hall when the bell rang, and gave me a deprecating smile as much as to say: "I am sorry to leave you, but you see I must go," so I said: "Goodbye, Manumae!" and he smiled more broadly and went off.





LITTLE HEATHENS, MALA, SOLOMON ISLANDS.





Once a week the second class was required to reproduce from memory a story which had been previously related to them. On one occasion the story had been that of the prince who hated and wished to wipe out all insects from the world, and who owed his life on several occasions to the timely intervention of one or another of these abhorred creatures. Manumae expressed his private views on the subject by writing: "There was once a prince who was a real fool." Another boy, just then much steeped in the Church Catechism, made the following reflection on the prince's attitude towards insects: "But Who created them and all things?"

In due time Manumae went home for his holiday, and while there a rumour reached us that he had been using his strength in a more doubtful cause, but we heard no details. When he reappeared he looked the picture of health and cheerfulness, and the school life, which had become slightly stagnant, brisked up at once. I was very curious to know what he had been up to, but it was a little time before I had a chance of asking him. However, an opportunity occurred, when he was extracting a refractory cork for me in the kitchen.

"Manumae," I said, "we heard that you had

been taking part in a brawl during the holidays. What was it about?"

Manumae looked puzzled. "It was something about a man who had accused another of wrong," I said to assist his memory.

Manumae's face cleared, and he went off into one of his infectious peals of laughter.

"Manumae," said I, trying to preserve my gravity, "it does not seem to me a thing to laugh about, when you nearly killed the poor man."

With a final sob of delight Manumae succeeded in composing himself. "He was a bad man," he said; "he accused his wife of wrongdoing and it was not true, and when it was brought before the judge he could say nothing. And then he spoke evil of us all, so we thought we should do well to beat him."

"And you did beat him, too; we heard that he came to poor X, who was very tired and wanted to sleep, and he had to rub him with painkiller and bandage him."

"Yes," replied Manumae delightedly; "he lay down for a month."

"And who looked after him?"

"His wife."

"The wife he had treated so badly?"

"Yes."

Poor wife! thought I; but aloud I expressed

my opinion that it was not Manumae's business to administer justice, but not being baptized yet he did not know, perhaps.

"But," I continued, "when you are baptized, and are a teacher, you mustn't beat every man that you consider bad, for there may be no X, and no painkiller, and no bandages."

Manumae smiled at me indulgently, as being a mere woman, but I could see that he looked back on the episode as one of the most satisfactory in his short life.

It was a sad day when he, with four others, left us for the senior school, having been baptized and confirmed in our little chapel. That is the sad side of a preparatory school—just as the boys get to their best they pass on out of our sight, though not out of our memory.

## A MALA SCHOLAR'S GROWTH

AMONG the boys who came to Bungana there were many unbaptized and many very raw specimens; but few, if any, were quite so unattractive as the boy whose loss now means so much to the Duff Islands.

When our eyes fell on the lanky, angular figure and unkempt appearance of Onéoné, with a cast in one eye which took away the beauty of the one redeeming feature of his face, we felt that at any rate here was plenty of raw material. And it was the raw material that made the work so interesting.

There was no lack of earnestness in Onéoné, and he worked as hard as anyone in school, but he kept his untamed and rather unhappy look for many months, and only very gradually became at all responsive. Then the wonderful thing happened; something in the Bible lesson struck him. A chink had been made, and you had that marvellous experience, the first awakening of a boy's soul.

After that, Onéoné's expression changed, a

softer look came into his face, and an answering smile was forthcoming. He made good progress. His first bit of missionary work was the teaching of a prayer to one of the little newcomers.

But while teaching others, Onéoné strayed occasionally himself, and was moved once to confess that he had been one of a party who had gone out at night to catch and cook fish, when all were supposed to be asleep. Unfortunately for them, fish is not a thing that can be dealt with secretly, and a strong pervading odour betrayed them.

A few months later he began to prepare for Baptism, but in consequence of a more serious backsliding it had to be deferred. A small patch of yams had been planted, to serve as a treat for all; yams were then a rare vegetable, and very highly prized. A casual question as to whether they were nearly ready for digging brought out a confession at night from one of the boys that he and some others, Onéoné among them, had dug up and eaten the precious yams, salving their consciences by doing it with the approval of the Bugotu workman who had planted them. Public opinion was unhesitating in its condemnation of the very lowest form of stealing; the culprits went about for a whole day very sad and ashamed, and it was felt that Onéoné's



baptism must be deferred. I think the fall from grace was good for the poor lad—certainly his character seemed to grow and deepen thereafter. He was a very reserved boy and had difficulty in expressing his thoughts, finding it easier to work his pen than his tongue. One evening I found him waiting for me on the verandah steps with a little note which he thrust into my hand. It contained a request that I would pray for someone belonging to him at home, who, he heard, was leading a bad life. It was not the last little note that he wrote to me; the other boys would have spoken out, but Onéoné couldn't.

At last, on the eve of Whitsun Day, 1913, Henry Onéoné was baptized, and very thankful we felt that after so many ups and downs the boy was brought safely in.

I think he never went back after this. The old Onéoné seemed to disappear, and a new, thoughtful, gentle nature developed, aided by his Confirmation later in the same year, after which he left us to finish his education at Norfolk Island.

Life in the college at Norfolk Island was a great change to the boys, and in most ways very delightful. But it had its special temptations and difficulties. A boy wrote to me once that

it was like going out of a fenced garden into a wide high-road all alone. It must have been at Norfolk Island that Henry met with a boy who had volunteered to teach in the Duff Islands, and who inspired him with the same wish. Henry wrote later, saying that he had made up his mind to go as a missionary to Taumako. This meant very real isolation, as the ship does not call there every voyage, and no Mala girl was likely to be willing to go into exile with him.

Later Henry wrote from Taumako, saying that there were a good many beginning to come for instruction, and that the people were friendly and wished for him to stay. They gave a definite proof of their wish shortly by buying him a wife from the village on the other side. "A wife," they astutely thought, "will bind him for ever to us." Henry wrote and told us of this too, and how he had prepared her for Baptism and chosen the name of Florence.

But letters could only come and go very irregularly, and I had little hope of ever seeing Henry again, when to our great delight the ship brought him, his wife, and two children, Katie and Wilfred, to Siota in 1924. He came partly for a little change, and partly to help in preparing some twenty small boys for one of the

preparatory schools, while the college was closed for a few months. Henry was still the same rather lanky figure, but his face had gained a beautiful expression, and he had evidently gone forward a long way in the last few years. His wife was a tall, graceful girl, with the Polynesian straight dark hair and a fairer skin, and a very sweet expression. She was beautifully clean, preferring to take her bath seated on a rock in the sea rather than repair to the wash-house with a bucket of fresh water. She is the only pupil of whom I could say that the material she sewed was as clean at the finish as when first put into her hands. Florence was still very young, although her third child was born a few weeks after her arrival, and Henry himself could not be more than twenty-five.

The baby, born and baptized at Siota, was named Luke—"because," said Henry, "St. Luke is the Patron Saint of Siota, and there has always been a baby born during a college term." As a matter of fact, there was no college when Luke appeared upon the scene, but perhaps Henry considered that it was represented by him.

Florence had not yet learnt to read, but was keen to do so. Our verandah was the school-room, and the hour as near to 9 a.m. as domestic

arrangements permitted, seeing that Henry looked after the family during school-time. We began with one of Hole's beautiful pictures. I doubt if Florence had ever seen a coloured sacred picture, and these filled her with amazed delight. I think, also, that she had never realized that our Lord was once a wee baby, just like "Luku," and it seemed to give her extreme pleasure and satisfaction. We then passed to the serious task of learning to read, but whenever I saw her brain beginning to give way under the strain, we broke off, and took to sewing. It is accounted one of the useful and desirable handicrafts of women in the islands, and she was occupied in making minute garments for Katie and Wilfred. Florence knew no Mota (which is the *lingua franca* in all our training schools) and I knew nothing of the Taumako dialect, but she could speak a little Mala, so we conversed as best we could in that language. It is wonderful, too, how much can be conveyed and understood without words. And at first was very shy and reserved, but that wore off, and she used to break into a natural, merry laugh when something struck her as funny. The whole school did not last much beyond half an hour, as the family awaited her return.

Theirs was one of those very happy homes that

are to be found in Christian Melanesia. See little Katie, the eldest, aged about four, coming with her father to prayers in the morning, parting from him at the door, and trotting in all alone at the women's entrance! She kneels down, puts her tiny hands together and says her prayer, then struggles on to her seat. Throughout the short service she behaves with the utmost decorum. It is true that she can see her father on the other side, and he occasionally looks round encouragingly; also, there are the twenty-two little boys in front, whose movements afford unfailing interest. Still, to occupy a seat all alone, to say nothing of the entry and exit, takes some courage when one is only four years old.

Wilfred attends at night, slung on his mother's back, while "Luku" at home sleeps under the eye of his father. If he wakes, Henry may be heard singing softly to his little son, and, listening, one used to hope that the child would grow up as good a man as his father, and carry on his work some day.

But no, "Luku" had only come to pay a passing visit: some childish ailment struck him, and quickly he went from us. I went in with a little wreath of flowers, and found what had been such a happy home turned to desolation,



and full of anguish that could be felt. There in a corner of the room sat Henry, stricken with grief, Katie and Wilfred clinging round his neck as to the one real thing left. Little Luke lay looking like a lovely cherub, while near him sat poor Florence, weeping quiet but bitter tears.

In the islands there is little time for realization of loss. The tiny grave was quickly made ready, and the bell summoned us to the church, where a deep sympathy had brought everyone together. There was no procession of bearers or mourners, Florence was already in church, and I think every throat felt choked when the young father came in with a set face, carrying the little bundle tenderly in his arms, as he had so often carried the little living child. It looked so pathetically tiny when he laid it before the Altar-steps, as if its mother should have been kneeling beside it. And then we listened to that perfect story of the calling of little children by our Lord, and how tenderly He took them up. We trust it brought comfort to Henry, but poor Florence could have understood nothing, and wanted no one but herself to hold little "Luku."

The cemetery, beautiful with crotons and hibiscus, is about five minutes' distance, and Florence followed quietly as if in a dream.



Henry laid the little child to rest, and as is our custom, we strewed flowers over him, then left him sleeping in the bosom of mother earth, and turned back home.

It was a sad end to the visit. Henry would naturally have stayed on for the next college term before returning to his work, but Florence could not face the idea of remaining, and perhaps losing another child, so they all went back the next month in the ship.

There was a hope that after a few more years of experience, Henry might come again to be prepared for Holy Orders, and so become of still greater help to his people. But I think that grief had struck very deep, and perhaps had sapped his strength, never very great, for early the following year came the news that he, too, had passed away. "Henry Onéoné is dead," was the curt postscript to a letter I received from one of his old schoolfellows. In Melanesia the plain fact is enough, no need to explain what the illness was, or how long it lasted—that is of no interest, it is the death alone that counts, and of sore account it must have been to that little island in the Duff group to which he had given himself so unreservedly, and to those three to whom he stood for everything that was great and good and kind.

So short a life, so full of promise, so necessary to his people—surely nothing but a call to some higher work, from which they, too, will benefit, can explain his sudden leaving.















